

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
LAWRENCE**

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INTERVIEWER: YILDEREY ERDENER
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**Y = YILDEREY
E = EDWIN**

SG-LA-T520

Y: You were talking about the people who died in that house.

E: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. You see, in the old days, and of course on a cold day you have a lot of steam in the dye house. (Y: Uh huh) And you had, you had belts that would run fans to pull out the steam. The steam was, you couldn't see through it like a big fog. So.

Y: What year are we talking about more or less?

E: Oh, twenty-two, twenty-three.

Y: 1922, 23?

E: Yeah, and so on, right there, in there. And then sometime that, and the steam, it softened up the belt and made them slip. So they wouldn't take out the steam. And you had dye kettles there, twenty or thirty, and they were boiling. And all the steam was coming out, and no fan to take them out. It's very difficult you know. And then they use resin.

Y: What did they use?

E: Resin.

Y: What is that?

E: They use resin on, on uh, bows in the violin. (Y: Oh, oh yeah) They use, you know, resin. Like it must take the moisture like, it makes(--). The belts would get so slippery in the steam, they wouldn't run the, they wouldn't run the fan. Well coming back to what you want, I don't know, I don't know much else. As I say.

Y: About the people who died you were talking about.

E: Yeah, well, and then somebody, sometimes they'd fall off. And they had stagings up in the ceiling. And somebody in the fog would fall off.

Y: You know, my problem is uh, uh, since you worked in that dye house you know what you are talking about, but I, I cannot imagine what you are talking about. So those belts, what was the function? Why was there those belts?

E: Well you had a motor have the size of this room. (Y: Yeah) And it was on the ceiling, and that gave the power. And that turned an extension of the motor. (Y: Uh huh) And on that motor extension was a belt. And that belt, twenty-thirty feet, this wide, would, would run from here to there. And that would, that belt was connected with a lot of pulleys you might say. You know what a pulley is, of course? (Y: Yes) And then that one would run on a shaft. They called it a shaft. You know, this part, and the wheel was on, the pulley was on this side. (Y: Uh huh) And that would run for maybe forty feet. And it had all kinds of, long shaft and all the pulleys. And every pulley ran a machine. There was a tight belt and a idle. And when you wanted the machine to stop, you turned, you pulled the, you pushed the belt from here to the tight pulleys, to this idle pulley, and stop the machine. Today you just push the button, the motor will stop, you see. But those days everything was run by belt.

Y: Yeah. So those changes did come suddenly, or gradually?

E: No, no. Well we had to, we try, we try one and working, get some more and more, you know? They keep adding. Modernize. You modernize a small way, you try it and they like it. And then you, and you add to it. Pretty soon everything is modernized.

Y: Yeah. How did, did people like those changes? I mean your friends, or you?

E: Well they didn't mind them. We didn't mind them. We, it came gradually. We weren't, we were in favor of improving. (Y: You were?) Oh sure! (Y: Yeah) I don't, I don't like these stories. You've heard of "Bread and Roses". (Y: Yeah) Well that was a misnomer. The whole thing was wrong. There were no roses then. It was, it was tough. People had no mortgages. I mean you had to pay your mortgage. You had no savings that amounts, didn't amount to anything. You had some, but you didn't have any insurance. If you got sick you didn't have any hospital insurance. You, it was difficult. But people didn't mind. We used to, that was a regular work. A regular, they didn't know about social security, and all sorts of insurance. They didn't know about that, so they didn't miss it. They just, they had to do it. There was no great, no great welfare programs. (Y: [coughs], Yeah) There were, there were programs for the poor. You know, there were some program that way. City Mission they called it. It was in that building next to the Grace Church. That was a City Mission for many years.

Y: City Mission, what was the function uh, of that?

E: To help the poor too. (Y: Poor?) It was a mission like a missionary. There were a city, a

city, a mission in the city. And they'd give out food, and help people.

Y: Yeah, I mean and how, how did people qualified as poor? How did they know?

E: Well they had, they had some people in our church.

Y: They knew who has what?

E: Well they go visit these people and check on them, see if they needed it. (Y: Yeah) You know, not [unclear] completely, but in general they'd go visit them. And if they were qualified they would give them food.

Y: City Mission. So it was not for a particular ethnic group, like Germans, or (--)

E: No, it was for everybody. (Y: For everyone?) I think the city mission was more Protestant. I'm not sure, but I think it was. And the Catholic has another mission, different part of the city, for the Catholics. Somewhat, that's not exactly so. (Y: Right. Right) But that was in general the City Mission usually had a Protestant clergy sort of head of it in a way. In those days the line of distinction between Protestant and the Catholic was much more, much more strict. I know I lived in a Catholic neighborhood. I was the only Protestant on the street, and I had it a little rough. You can't blame them. The kids were, you know, there was some feeling that the Catholic Church had, we were Protestants, we were out of the circle. We weren't going to heaven, because we weren't Catholic. You know, it was, today that's different. We have, now our Council of Churches. I was treasurer of the Council of Churches for ten or twelve years. I was not only treasurer, but I raised the money. And uh, now that was originally the Council of Churches. That's a world wide, world Council of Churches, Council of Churches in this country and in the town, all the Protestant Churches, usually all of them, there's always some strict people that, I don't want to be unfair to them, but they thing that we're too liberal. You know, they, they're very strict with the bible, and I'm not criticizing that either. I love the bible. But they, and some of us were too liberal. They believed in every sermon had to have the blood of Christ. You see they were strict then, and they thought that they, in German we say [words unclear-spoken in German]. These people think they found the powder than the rest of us. (Y: Right) They couldn't be, and they found scriptural basis, where they couldn't mix, because the bible would say, don't mix with unbelievers, or whatever it is, like that. I don't mean, you know, in the sense I mean (--)

Y: So you couldn't mix with those Catholic kids on the street?

E: And in those days, there wasn't, now, like now (--)

Y: Those days are, what are we talking, 1920's maybe, or ?

E: Yes, and all in there for quite some years.

Y: 30's also?

E: Yes, I would think so, and the churches didn't, they didn't (--)

Y: You couldn't be friends, all those kids, you couldn't associate with them?

E: Well you did, you were in school, but there was always that feeling. You know, there was a feeling. Now they wouldn't be allowed to go in a Protestant church. That would be an [unclear] to come to a Protestant church. That's uh, where we come from in the beginning, the church controlled the souls of the Saints, of the people. They, if you didn't go to church you couldn't be buried in the Protestant, in the Catholic church, Catholic cemetery. They, but they had, they had you, they had you bound. See? I don't use the word chains, but you were bound to the Catholic church. And if you didn't stand up, you didn't go to heaven. Because the church had the power to put you in heaven, or out.

Y: What about in the work place? Did you have such feelings, Protestant and (--)

E: No, no, no. I don't think so.

Y: That's just in the street?

E: Well when you work, you know, you had to work side by side with people anyway. You weren't, you weren't in a religious atmosphere. It didn't, it didn't affect you so much. But uh, so anyway. As I say, I was, ten or twelve years I was, I raised the money for that. Well today, today the Catholic Church is in the Council of Churches in Lawrence. Saint Mary's, and all the big Catholic Churches, they're in with the Council of Churches. We do things together. Like we, we run a vacation bible school during the summer. We have about a dozen churches, they have a week or two of vacation school of the kids in that neighborhood. But today it's both. And they're pretty amiable among themselves. They're doing, they're doing pretty well, but it's changed completely.

Y: Yeah. Right. So those belts, they were one (--)

E: Oh, somewhere that wide, yes.

Y: One, one feet, one foot?

E: More than that. Sometimes a foot and a half at least.

Y: And you said when those friends, when the belts hit them and they died, what happened to the families and things? The survivors, what they (--)

Do you know any, do you remember any uh (--)

E: No I don't. No, no. No.

Y: I mean as you said, there was not any insurance. They was not any (--)

E: They probably had some insurance for fatalities like that I think. You know, they must have

had some insurance. But it wasn't adequate.

Y: Yeah. So uh, and in dye house, uh, during the war, you uh, you used to put the same olive green color for the soldiers. What, what other colors did you, do you remember?

E: Well once you're into the dying business, uh, the Germans had about I'd say 95% of the color in the world.

Y: Olive green?

E: Every, every color. All kind of colors. The Germans made those colors. They were great chemists. And we were green at it. We didn't know anything about color. Now that's a foolish statement. But we didn't have the color. We didn't know how to make the eyes in this country. When World War I started we were cut off from German dyestuffs. (Y: Oh yeah) And we didn't, we did the most stupid things. Not stupid things, but we were necessary to do certain things. For instance, uh, of course you know, dyes, 95% of the dyes are made from coal tar. (Y: From what?) Coal tar. That's the destructive distillation of coal. You burn the coal without the absence of oxygen, with no oxygen. Otherwise it'd just burn up, we have ashes. But they, they uh, they use the destructive distillation, like you know what distilling water is? You boil it, and it goes through. Well in the, in the uh, in the dying, it wasn't until about 1865 I think, where an Englishman, Perkins (--) In those days every, you cured everything with quinine. You're familiar with quinine? That was like penicillin was for awhile here, you know?

Y: How do you spell it? Quin?

E: Q U I N I N E, quinine. And it was effective. It was not a hoax or anything. It was a good cure. And everybody wanted to make quinine. You know that was, that was the cure, the cure all. And this young Englishman went home that summer, and he tried to learn(--) Sit in a decent chair.

Y: No, that's all right. I want to listen to you from here.

E: Uh, he went home looking from quinine, and he found the first coal tar dye. And now 95% of the color of the world is from coal tar. Coal, coal tar. Tar from coal. But it didn't burn it because it would be ashes. So they destructive distilled it. They distilled like, so as to get the, because there's all kind of divisions of color. Some color is fast to light. Some colors are poor to light. Some are good in washing. Some are good for something else. Some are good for brightness, but not fast. And then that was quite a science to describe. And to break up all of these dyes with long names and difficult formulas. And (--)

Y: What kind of color could one produce from the coal?

E: Practically everything. Almost everything.

Y: Really? I thought only black. (E: Oh no, no.) I mean I'm an ignorant person in that regard.

E: Black was made from dogwood. From, from, from uh, oh, what am I going to say? From a tree. (Y: Oh, okay) Black, see, my mind isn't good.

Y: Yeah. That's fine. That's fine.

E: Good. But uh, in the old days you went to a football game, all you saw was browns and blacks, and dark blue. You didn't see any bright pinks, and yellows, and blues, and everything. There's no limit. And that's all because of the coal tar dye industry. (Y: Yeah) But World War I, we didn't know anything, almost nothing about making coal tar, making dye.

Y: So they uh, I'm sorry, they came from Germany? The formulas, how to make them, or uh (--)

E: The whole, the dyestuff, we bought the dyestuff all made, all made. (Y: Oh, the dyes itself) All made. (Y: Oh, I see. Uh huh, uh huh) But then of course we hired German chemist to come here. And we, we started up making dye in a small way and a bigger way. And now we, I don't think anybody can, maybe nobody makes dyes any better than we do. And they, but they made, black was made from logwood. Logwood is what I'm trying to say.

Y: Umhm, for the black color?

E: It was a black color. Well it really wasn't in a sense. But that's where blacks were made. And they were, we were so desperate for color, we had nothing. Almost nothing. And Lowell Textile School of course was the peer of dying, you know what I mean. They taught it. They had a band. And they, they wanted some suits for the band. And they made a light blue out of dogwood. You see, well it's a long subject. If you take dogwood and you mix it, an inorganic substance with an organic substance, and that makes a color link. And the color link, you can put the inorganic substance on the wool, and then you put the dye on top of it, you have a color, a color link, and it's insoluble. It stays there. Well, so Lowell Textile School made, they combined dogwood with tin, and that made a light blue. Aluminum was a little darker. And then you went to chrome and that was pretty good all around. And then you went to copper, and (Y: copper?) copper. Copper. You know copper.

Y: The c o p p e r? (E: Yes) yeah.

E: And then you went to iron. Now iron made a fast color, but it was uh, it was black, you know, dark. Copper was lighter. Chrome, aluminum and tin, now when you put the dogwood with tin, you had a light blue. But in one afternoon they went out to play, and it was raining, and then sunshine it lost all the color just in one day. But all of a sudden. You know, you have to start, like everything, look at the sea boat. Look at the, or whatever else started [unclear]. They had to have faith. So, when I talk about dyestuff (--)

Y: So after the First World War you said you cut all these relationships with Germany. And everything was coming from there, and you started producing.

E: We had to produce ourselves. Now indigo, indigo was made from the indigo plant. There's

an indigo flower. And indigo. And it was so remunerative, it made so much money, that the Indians went hungry to make it. They just grew indigo instead of food.

Y: What color is this indigo?

E: Blue. Indigo was a color. Indigo blue. (Y: Oh, I see) And it's very very fast to light. You know, you can, you can be out all summer and it wouldn't fade. Now like this light blue with a Textile School Band, (Y: Umhm) that would fade in an afternoon, or wash out. You know, the dyer had to know certain colors are made to be fast to light. And now for instance, tuxedos, you wouldn't have to have a black that says fast to light. You don't go in the light with a tuxedo. So you could use what they call a fugitive to light, but uh, so. Where was I now? I gave you, oh, there's the tin, and they had all kinds of different ways of color. Now in the old days they made brown out of fustic, and fustic was a plant.

Y: What was it?

E: Fustic, F U S T I C. You won't, we won't come in contact with that word in your live I don't think. But it was a brown color. And uh, and then they, they would, see, logwood was really a blue in a sense, you know. It was really a blue. But you put blue and brown together, and you get black. You see? You see there are three colors, red, yellow and blue. Those are the primary colors.

Y: You are like a painter, you know, mixing colors and then painting.

E: Yeah, I like that. I like that. You know, and the whole thing was fascinating.

Y: And uh, yeah.

E: You made yellow, red, yellow and blue were the primary colors. Now if you put red and blue, you get purple. And you put yellow and blue and you get green. And yellow and orange you get, no, yellow and red you get orange. And then, then it tells you the secondary colors are two, two colors, red and blue together. See, that's the secondary color.

Y: So primary colors were uh, (E: yellow) yellow, ((E: red and blue) red and blue. And secondary colors were, (--)

E: Were whatever you want, whatever two you put together.

Y: Oh, I see.

E: Put red and yellow together, you get orange. You got blue and, blue and yellow, blue and yellow you get green. And red and, red and blue you get purple.

Y: How, how did you get the dark olive green uh, what did you call it? Huchi?

E: Khaki.

Y: Khaki. Khaki, yeah.

E: I think Khaki means, I don't know, it's, I don't know whether it's Turkish, or I don't know. It's not, not, not American. It means like a dirt color.

Y: Dirt color?

E: I think so. Well what were you saying? We were (--)

Y: How did you produce that khaki color?

E: Well you see, we have been talking about turciary colors. Do you know what turciary is? Turciary is three. Three colors together. Turciary, turciary means three I think, [unclear]. Now if I put, you wouldn't believe it, but if I put red, yellow, and blue together, I get black.

Y: Red, yellow, blue?

E: And make black. You get the three colors. Turciary. And that makes black. Now it may not make black right away. I might not be black like in a sense, you know, but gray is black. Gray is a black tint. Pink is a tint of red. You see? But a turciary color, now you would have, in order to get black you'd have to have a dark blue, and a dark red, and a dark yellow. And put them together to make them black. Now you can put them in light colors, red, yellow and blue. Put them together in light colors, and you'd have a light, you'd have a gray, which was black. Gray is a tint of black. So. And in order to get these dark colors, you say, if you put a yellow and blue, yellow and blue together, a straight yellow and a straight blue, you'd get a beautiful green.

Y: Straight yellow and straight (--)

E: Yellow and, yellow and blue. (Y: Yeah) You get a green, You know that. Now to make them dark I have to get some red in there, make a turciary. See, if I put black in there, a certain percentage of that combination is dark, cause it's black. We want a pure blue, a pure green, you put a pure blue and a pure yellow. No red. And you had a bright beautiful, but if you put a little red in it, you got a certain percent. Supposing you put 10% of red in there, you would have 10% of gray, in with that green it would be a darker green. Now you're talking about that color khaki. Well that would take, you'd have more red, or green, or black. You'd mix them together. Of course then they would make, they would make colors, like a khaki color anyway. They'd make it as khaki.

Y: Could you tell sitting in dye house, could you tell what kind of contract American Woolen Company signed? Looking at the colors you produced there in dye house? I mean during the war you probably produced this khaki olive green, but you did not produce only that color. Later you switch to other colors like (--)

E: We made every color. You know, we made all sorts of colors. It was just during the war we made more khaki than anything else. But we now, now we make thousands of pounds of bathing

suit colors. (Y: bathing suits?) Bathing suits. Red, and you know, beautiful colors. The knitting. They went under knitting, not under weaving.

Y: I was thinking you know, the dominating colors you produced, one of them the khaki color, that's called khaki color, and then what about the blue search color? The blue search. You know, I understand that was dominant production in (--)

E: Yes it was. You see everything is changed. You know, we progress. In those days people were what they called 18oz. goods. 18 ounces to the yard. That was pretty heavy stuff. That was, you know what canvas is? (Y: No) Canvas is a heavy cotton cloth. It's used in tents. (Y: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah. Right) Canvas. Well, and then we got the automobile. We didn't need 18 ounce goods. We just went from the house to the car. You didn't need a suit that was 80 ounce.

Y: 18 ounce, one yard.

E: One yard. (Y: yeah) And that was, that was pretty thick stuff.

Y: I never heard about measuring the yard in terms of waste. This is uh(--)

E: That's cotton. That's corduroy. Now you get heavy, anyway.

Y: Yeah, I see what you mean. Uh, yeah.

E: See they, they would (--)

Y: So when did that 18 hours change?

E: It gradually went out, because of the automobile I think.

Y: Automobile?

E: See you're people lived in your automobile. You didn't go out hiking so much. You didn't hike to work. You road. So you didn't need such heavy clothing, especially inside. You didn't need and 18 ounce. That's what the, well the khaki, soldiers wore substantially 18 ounce heavy, heavy goods, you know. And then, then they went, suits went down to about 14 ounces, from 18, because they didn't need such heavy clothes, they weren't hiking to work. They were in the car, in a warm car.

Y: What year would you guess?

E: Oh, it was gradual, but uh. Let's see. I would say, oh, forty and fifties they were beginning to change. And then it was in the summer, the summer you were wearing eight or nine ounces per yard.

Y: I never heard that. It was very interesting to me.

E: Yeah, eight or nine yards. (Y: Yeah) That's corduroy too. It's cotton. Mine is cotton.

Y: What about this?

E: Yeah, that looks nice.

Y: And this one is uh, (--)

E: Oh this must be 20 ounces. See how heavy that is?

Y: Yeah, it is heavy. So uh, it was interesting that you uh, correlated automobile and change in ounces.

E: It's my idea. My idea. That's the way I, I see it.

Y: So it changed in weight, and uh, (--)

E: And then, and look at the kids today. They wore denim. And denim is, it's all cotton. (Y: Yeah) And they didn't dress up anymore. And I think it's coming, it changes back and forth. But in general, kids like the sloppier they are, the more holes they have in them, the better they like it. But that changed. Once in awhile the trend of a young people would get, they'd get older. And they would want something a little more dignified.

Y: What about the blue surge? Can you tell me a little bit? How did it affect the dye house in the back? Or ?

E: It was a good color to have, or you could dye the, the [unclear] light change, we could dye them in the blue. You know, darker, see. But you are limited there too. You couldn't leave the cloth in the kettle forever. It would get filtered. You know, too many, too much agitation. It would become filled. You had to get the shade before it got filled.

SIDE I ENDS

SIDE II BEGINS

E: ...You're looking for the year.

Y: More or less, yeah.

E: Yeah, no. See I, [pause] I've been retired twenty-three years. '65, '75, '85. Twenty-three years I've been retired.

Y: So, [unclear], '65.

E: And that's, that's oppressing. You can live in a country where I can retire and live practically

the way I lived before, which is, which is a blessing. A lot of people don't have anything then they retired. Isn't that right? And further more we have old folks homes. We have welfare, we have insurance. We have all of these wonderful things. And regardless of how the taxes are, we can be thankful, compared to (--) And they're talking about, even the postage, .25 cents. I'll bet you some countries, what's the postage in Turkey?

Y: Uh, it is cheaper than here.

E: Is it?

Y: Yeah. I mean I sent from here, pay .45 cents, but from there is is something, .35, or so.

E: Is that so. Well anyway, I, I think no matter how much we tax, or what we have, we have to, we have to pay for civilization. We have to pay pollution. (Y: Right) Civilization brought it on. But it's worth it. I'd rather have, pay more and live like I'm living now, in warmth and comfort, and joy. I'd rather, I'm willing to pay for it. I got to pay for it. You can't get it for nothing. Now where else were we?

Y: Well we were talking about the blue surge.

E: Well, of course the Navy was all blue, blue surge. Then navy blue it was called. And we did tons of that stuff too. Now we did a lot f that indigo. Indigo was very fast to light.

Y: It was a kind of blue, right?

E: Well it was a dark blue. (Y: Dark blue) Navy blue, and the dark blue. And (--)

Y: I thought the blue surge changed around 19, early 1930's. Is it true? (E: You say what?) I mean the America Woolen Company started following the fashion, and so blue surge was not anymore in big demand.

E: It could be. I don't know the exact years but. Now let me figure. I've been retired twenty-five years.

Y: So '65, 1965.

E: I got to go by the years. '65. And uh, I bet for twenty years were were established on, on getting away from blue surge suits. Not as a suit, but they were heavy. Usually they're associated with heavy, heavy cloth. And uh, uh, and then as I say, due to the automobile, I think we were going to get the 15 ounce instead of 18 ounce. And now I think, I don't think there's any much 15 ounce left. There weren't many. I think the average might be thirteen ounces, fourteen. And tropical, they call tropicals, is a lightweight. They'd be about, they'd be nine to ten ounces.

Y: How did the, how did it affect the workers? I mean whether it is fourteen ounces, or eighteen ounces. Did he make(--)

E: It didn't affect them at all really. (Y: None at all?) It didn't affect them, no.

Y: In terms of making money, or in terms of working hours?

E: No, no, no. There was nothing.

Y: Was there less job, or more hours?

E: No, no, about the same I would say. I don't think there's any particular difference in the time it took to produce. If you were to add thread that side, or that side, who cares? You know, you wouldn't know.

Y: I mean uh, I don't know. That's why I'm asking you. If it is thick maybe I thought it took more hours, and (--)

E: No, it wasn't that much thick. (Y: No?) Well nine ounces of eighteen, that's only half as much. And in terms of a thread, you wouldn't, it wouldn't be noticed particularly.

Y: Yeah, did you notice uh, when were you, where were you in 1935? In Ayers, or in Wood Mill? 1935?

E: I was in the Wood Mill? Let's see, because twenty-five years, sixty-five, I suppose I was in the Wood Mill from about twenty, around twenty, around twenty to fifty.

Y: So long?

E: Oh yes. See I was with the American Woolen all my life. No all my life. The last fourteen years I was with the Bolder Company, (Y: Yeah) General Tire.

Y: When did you switch to Ayer? Ayer uh?

E: Well, twenty-five, sixty-five, fifty-five, fifty. 1950.

Y: 50? Well uh, Wood Mill closed in 1954. So uh, for (--)

E: I don't know exactly, but they, we closed before the Wood Mill. The Ayer Mill closed before the Wood Mill.

Y: Yeah. So according what I read, according to the book sources, Wood Mill closed 1954, and the final was '56.

E: Yeah, we, we must have closed I suppose in '50, Ayer Mill.

Y: Now the reason why I ask was at some point American Woolen Company stopped producing those woolen, or blue surge things, and they switched, or they tried to produce with synthetic things. (E: Yes, yes) And so nylon and those kind of stuff, and they started to follow the

fashion, not anymore miles of blue surge fabric, but they started producing a little bit(--). What is this?

E: That's my furnace.

Y: Oh. They started producing a little bit fabrics in I don't know, in red, or (E: design, designs like) right, designs, right. They started you know, not anymore miles after miles.

E: They never stopped completely. It wasn't all blue. It was predominantly blue maybe at that time. They always associated a heavy woolen suit with blue, or something. But they were making all kinds of fabric, but blue at that time was very predominantly produced, but not completely. They make a little blue surge today, but not much.

Y: Right. Yeah. And so 1935 brought all these new laws. Roosevelt you know, Social Security Act, and uh (--)

E: Was it '35?

Y: 1935, 1936. Did the people, not necessarily you, but uh, people around you, or also you, what, what was the affect of that? I mean did people feel better because they were uh (--)

E: I, I really am no authority that. I'm know some of my friends didn't like it. They were austere people, and they, they felt they wanted to run themselves. You know, they didn't want the government to run them. Not in a bad sense, but they were, they were good character and they wanted to earn their own way. Their own doctors, and their own, you know, they wanted to be sufficient to themselves.

Y: Umhm.

E: But I think we all accepted it. We don't, we didn't accept, there was no quarrel about it I don't think. Not that I know of.

Y: Now social security, did it bring some kind of security, or uh, you know, some kind of better feeling that they were not, they had social security, or workman's compensation?

E: Yeah. I don't know when compensation came in. I don't know when that came in, because that was all mandatory at that time. (Y: Yeah) But I don't think there was any great objections that I knew. I knew of a few characters, good men, fine men, independent. They liked their independence. They wanted to keep it like, we still have, we still have our independence, but uh, (--). Well I guess England went all out. They went beyond us in, in insurance and those care. I guess it wasn't a good pattern to follow I don't think, because they, they practically went bankrupt with it.

Y: Did you feel insecure in terms of being layed off? I mean (--)

E: I had a unique experience. I never loafed one single day in all my life since I was fourteen

years old. I was blessed again you see? I, I never loafed one single day. I went to work when I was fourteen. I went in the spinning room, I went in the, and I went in office boy. Then I went in the dye house and I spend my life in the dye house. And I spent my life in the dye house. And I was transferred from the Wood Mill assistant to boss dyer in the Wood Mill, in the Ayer Mill. And I was there all my life. Well for fifteen years as dyer. And then I knew Mr. Bolton, the owner of the Bolder Company. (Y: Yeah) They employed maybe over a 1,000 people here. They made combs. And we made plastics for upholstery furniture, and inside of cars. We had big contracts with the automobile industry. And the first passes were terrible. You get in a cold day and they were brittle. Well everybody started poorly like that.

Y: But the reason, you know, I talked to other people, former textile workers. And most of them talk about insecurity, insecurity of jobs that they might lose their job. They were layed off. (E: Of course) They waited for eight weeks, or less, or more. And I wonder why you did not have any, I have an assumption. I don't want to tell you. Because you were qualified? Because you learned skill? You were (--) Well I was what they called an overseer. I was boss dyer. I was head of (--) (Y: You were overseer?) I was head of my department.

Y: That was your title, overseer?

E: Yes, I guess so. But the dyer got a, or they called them boss weavers too. It's like an overseer. (Y: Right) So I was never subject to layoff.

Y: Because of your skill? Because of the status you reached?

E: My status, that's the word. See, I was a status where I was not, I hired the people, and fired them, and I didn't fire many, but I might do that. But I was in a position, I was the leader. I was the head of it.

Y: Well how did you become such a leader? I mean what, (--)

E: Because I went to school nights for twenty-five years.

Y: So the education helped then?

E: To get, the more education, the higher your status.

Y: Right.

E: So I was, I was a boss dyer. And when the people went on strike, we had quite a few strikes, and we went on strike, the men in my status, we ran the kettles ourself. We put wooden shoes on, clogs. They wear wooden shoes in dye houses you know, because you're in water. (Y: Umhm, yeah) Wooden soles like that. And we ran the kettles ourself. So therefore I never was layed off. I never, I never had a day off, layed off since I was fourteen years old. I worked long times. I worked with the American Woolen years and years and years. And then I, then I transferred to the Bolder Company, and I was with them for fifteen years. See, we made combs, and plastics, and stuff. And I knew the, we knew the owner. The owner was German.

Y: Bolden? (E: Huh?) Bolden Companies?

E: Bolder, Bolder. (Y: Yeah, Bolder) They came here from Germany. I think it's incidental, but I think he was sort of in with the party in a way. He knew what was going on. He was in the upper status. And he knew what Hitler was headed for. And I think from that I think they decided to come to America, I think. Don't quote me. But I think he did. And they were German, and Christian, so they came to our church. We spoke German in those days, you see. Sunday school and children, and everybody was German. So he came here. So we knew them pretty well. We knew them socially in that way. Why sometimes they'd go on a trip for five weeks, and my wife and I would live in their home. They had butlers, and servants, and we sort of took care of the children. Tell them stories at night, and we went horse back riding. They had horses. We went horse back riding with them. So we knew them pretty well. So when the Ayer Mill was going to close, I was offered a job to come with them and color. See, they were making plastics, and with color. So I was, I didn't get any time off. I went right to work for them.

Y: Probably because you knew him, right? I mean other people had trouble finding jobs after (--)

E: Oh yes, well I knew him. We knew them pretty well. We knew each other socially, and we were in church together. We, well we were socially with them. Like, because we were German I guess. And uh, as I say, I was blessed. I never loafed a day in my life.

Y: Yeah. Yeah. Also you are the right person to ask the question, since you won't (--)

E: I really don't know anything.

Y: You know a lot. You know a lot. But uh, there were many strikes you mentioned. So the first one, when you were eleven years old, 1912. And then what came afterwards? If you put, if you try to put those strikes in chronological order, what do you remember? 1912, the first one.

E: I don't know. The next thing, I don't remember and in between I don't remember. I was a [unclear] kid twelve years old to fourteen. I wouldn't remember much. I was a school, and I don't remember so much what happened. Of course then the next point was fourteen, and I went to work.

Y: Yeah. What was the next strike after 1912?

E: Gee, I don't know.

Y: Do you remember 1919?

E: No. (Y: 1920?) I guess there was a strike there, was there?

Y: Yeah, 1922 there was one.

E: I don't know. I do know we ran the kettles ourself. We were extra status. We ran the kettles ourself. We weren't on the, and we weren't in the labor force in a sense. You know, menial labor. We weren't in that. We were in a different, a different class. (Y: Right) Upper class you might say. No really in that sense, but (--)

Y: Right. I understand.

E: We in an upper class, and we weren't, we didn't strike. We weren't in the union. We weren't (--). But that was quite a, see that 1912 strike you know, that was the biggest confrontation in the nation at the time. It had capital in labor. It was really a tremendous impact on each other. And then finally I guess the strikers won the strike. They got so many cents an hour more, or something. And they got different hours. And then there was quite a battle there. Father O'Reilly was, it was a Catholic city, Lawrence, entirely, almost entirely. And the [unclear] Protestants were very much in the minority. (Y: Yeah) But they weren't, they weren't as though they were nothing. There were quite a few. It had, we had several churches here. And Father O'Reilly ran it. He ran the city government, and he ran everything in a good sense. When you have a good dictator it ain't so bad. But you get a bad one, you're out of luck. But anyway they came in, they were fierce on this fighting. They had an Anna, I don't know what her name was, but I think she came from Russia. They were Communists. Communists were strong. And I think it was about that time, or in there somewhere. And then we had Joe Etta. Etta was a strike leader. And they had to, they had to be strong. They were leading the people against strong money capitalists. They had to be strong. You might misjudge them, but they had to, they couldn't be weaklings to fight such a big battle. Anyway they, the strikers won, won the battle. And that had repercussions all over the country. It was the beginning of, I think we were among the first labor against, labor against capital. (Y: Right) And we won, and the textile industry all got a raise then. You know, they were really quite a strike, and quite a battle.

Y: In 1912 you were more or less under labor side, and then later you were a little bit more to (--)

E: I wouldn't know. I wasn't, I really wasn't old enough to know whether it was labor or capital. I wouldn't know.

Y: Yeah, yeah. I mean now, looking back, we can say that, but in those days I guess, yeah. But later you moved under, you were were not an ordinary laborer.

E: No, I was a boss dyer. I was the head of my department.

Y: So those strikes later did not really affect you as a person.

E: No. No. No they didn't.

Y: You probably couldn't participate in those strikes?

E: Could what?

Y: You could not participate in those.

E: Oh no, I wasn't a laborer. I had to be, I had to be uh, (Y: with the side of management) I was naturally a capitalist you might say.

Y: No, not capitalist, but with the management somehow.

E: Management. I was management, that's the word.

Y: Yeah.

E: I, I always was partial to capitalist. I always felt, for instance if it weren't for capitalism we wouldn't have had a Ford I don't think. You need capital to run big General Motors. It seems to me you do. It did then I think. And I think we got things, for instance Ford was able to make a car within our reach. Because we produced in such big numbers, but needed capital to do it I think. And, and I think whoever, we're all human. And when capitalist get the ascendancy, they abuse it. And when labor gets it, they abuse it. They only get together and get the benefits for both sides. I think capitalist could learn more from labor than from anybody else, because they're [few words unclear]. [Few word unclear], you can't learn much. But capital and labor are so far apart, especially those days. You could learn a lot if you, if you tried. Both sides, but no they, I always think of it, they, they, they fight and fight and lose everything. They gained a lot I know, but they, they hurt one another, and there's fights, quarrels. But it's necessary, you know, one side isn't going to give in anyway unless you fight for it.

Y: What about the unions? Did you notice them?

E: Yes, I had a lot to do with the unions. See, when your unions came in, the help got the feeling they were going to be the boss. You know? You'd have, you'd have an ordinary fellow, a nice fellow, but they what they call, [unclear] cliché like, they're feeling their oats. They have new power, and they weren't able, they weren't competent of their new power.

Y: They were not?

E: No, they were laborers, they then weren't educated. They weren't, they didn't know anything about management. They didn't go to school for management. They were menial laborers. Nothing wrong with them. they weren't worse than we, but they, but they came in and they wanted to, they felt as though they were going to tell us what to do. And they had such tremendous power, they could do it.

Y: What year was that when, when did they come in more or less?

E: Well let me see. Well it could have been around the 30's or somewhere around there. And they, I know you were talking, what did I have to do with it? I had [clears nose], excuse me. I had a lot to do with it. I was the boss dyer.

Y: Which uh, which union came? Which one was represented?

E: Well International workers of, (Y: Industrial workers?) IWW.

Y: IWW, yeah.

E: There was Joe Etta and this, I think she was a Communist. The woman came in [unclear] these people.

Y: What was her name? Anna you said?

E: Anna something. She was kind of a renown person.

Y: She came to the Wood Mill?

E: The the Lawrence strike. We were on strike and I represented the strike.

Y: Do you remember the name Red Fire, or Fire, that was a woman. She had that nickname. Red Fire, or something like that.

E: I know what you mean, but I can't remember the name either. (Y: Uh huh) But I had a lot to do with it. You see, these men, these ordinary men, I mean ordinary in a nice sense, they worked with me and there were no [unclear] and none, no class. So they felt, well now we're going to tell you what to do?

Y: They are going to run the place, huh?

E: Yeah. They were going to, the union gave them such power, and of course people blame Roosevelt for that. And he gave them the power. They, and we couldn't hardly do anything. You know, we, well that's not true. But we, we were restricted. We had to consider labor, and labor was in the driver's seat. The were running things, and I, I know many times I had to go to arbitration. See, we would have a quarrel, and we were dead match, we couldn't agree. So we went to arbitration. I won every arbitration I went to. See I was a scout master, and a Sunday school teacher, and a leader. So I felt guilty. I was taken advantage of these uneducated, not that I, I wasn't that good. I don't mean to say that. But at least was a little bit above them, my training. And I could talk and represent my case. I felt unequal. I didn't feel right taking advantage of these ignorant people who just thought they get there because they were union. But the arbitrators were fair.

Y: How did it work? I don't know much about. So the union had the representative person sitting in the, on the floor, or how did (--)

E: The union had, I think the union had a representative in every room. (Y: Every room) Spinning, cotton, no matter what they were. Dye house. There was always (--)

Y: And that person was one of the workers, or he (--)

E: One of the workers. Oh yeah, one of the workers. And he was voted by the people. And he, if they have an grievances, they'd see him. And he, and he, (--)

Y: So if I had any trouble I went to see, to see him.

E: My, my delegate, my representative.

Y: Yeah. And then I said the boss Edwin, did that to me and I don't think it is fair. And then what happened?

E: And he, I would try, I'd settle a lot of my things myself as the, as the boss.

Y: Between the union representative and you.

E: And the people, you know. Sometimes, I can't remember the nature of it, but I went several times to this board, and I won all of my cases. It was fair. Union against capital. I was capital I guess. And uh, and we presented our case (--)

Y: To whom?

E: To an arbitration board. (Y: I see) They had arbitration boards that would settle. We'd present our case like a lawyer, or jury, or something. And the arbitration board would decide when your wrong, and [unclear] right. And that was suppose to settle it.

Y: So if I as a laborer was right in my claim, what happened then? Let's say uh, um, something I felt that it wasn't,

E: You didn't need to do, you felt you didn't need to do, you shouldn't do it. And I felt you should do it. (Y: Yeah) So you go to arbitration and the arbitration would decide, you have to do it. Or you don't have to do it. It's out of order. Illegal. (Y: Right, right) It didn't accommodate to the set-up plans.

Y: Yeah, but the IWW was not all the time there. They were during the strike.

E: Well I think they, they continued, (Y: they continued?) after the strike. Of course they had a dominant part in the labor. And then, and then Roosevelt gave labor a big impetus, a big push up. The labor had as much to say as capital. They could demand things. They could, and you see, during the war they needed the material and they couldn't afford a strike. We were in war. So some capital, I don't want to go into that in detail, there's too much, but capital felt in general, what was I going to say. In general they felt that they wanted a certain way, and labor didn't want it, so you'd have an arbitration fight there. And but ordinarily the company, capital would give in. If they want 10% more money for this, capital would give it to them, because they could get it from the government. See, they could get it, the government would just go up on the government price, and the government would pay for it. And they got up to, got to menders, there were thousands of menders in Lawrence. Thousands. they mended the holes and sewed it in, made imperfect good from imperfect (--). So they, oh, they'd get a raise, they'd want some,

some kind of different kind of cloth like you said, the [unclear] would come in and they thought they'd ought to have a little more money. And the company would give it to [sneezes] them, not that, not that easily, but (--)

End of tape 2